

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1643
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, BR
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONTRADICTS STATEMENT BY FINANCE MINISTER
AND REAFFIRMS OPPOSITION TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSPECTION
OF BRAZIL.

1. SUMMARY. QUESTIONED ABOUT AN EARLIER STATEMENT BY
FINANCE MINISTER SIMONSEN THAT BRAZIL WOULD ACCEPT A VISIT
BY AN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP IF IT WERE UNBIASED AND
INSPECTED VARIOUS COUNTRIES, PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SPOKESMAN
CAMARGO ON MAY 10 DECLARED THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT
TO BE A PERSONAL VIEW, STATED THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING
SUCH A COMMISSION, AND REAFFIRMED THE GOB POSITION THAT
HUMAN RIGHTS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER NOT SUBJECT TO INVESTIGA-
TION BY THIRD PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A CONVERSATION MAY 5 WITH VISITING FRENCH JOURNALISTS,
FINANCE MINISTER SIMONSEN PASSED FROM FINANCIAL ISSUES TO A
DISCUSSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION, NOTING THAT THE
SITUATION IN BRAZIL HAD IMPROVED MARKEDLY UNDER THE GEISEL
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ADMINISTRATION. STATING HIS VIEW THAT BRAZIL WILL CONTINUE
TO REJECT SUGGESTIONS BY INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSIONS FROM
CERTAIN COUNTRIES OR BY CERTAIN ASSOCIATIONS WHO SEEK TO
INSPECT LOCALLY THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BRAZIL,
SIMONSEN NONETHELESS ADDED HIS PERSONAL BELIEF THAT
BRAZIL WOULD ACCEPT A HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
CONSISTING OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES,

INCLUDING BRAZIL, PROVIDED THE COMMISSION HAD NO POLITICAL LEARNINGS OR LINKS TO PARTICULAR GROUPS OR ASSOCIATIONS, AND WOULD BE INSPECTING THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL.

3. QUESTIONED MAY 9 BY LOCAL REPORTERS ABOUT SIMONSEN'S COMMENTS, PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SPOKESMAN CAMARGO PROMISED A CONSIDERED ANSWER THE NEXT DAY, IN THE MEANTIME PHONING SIMONSEN, WHO CONFIRMED THE REMARKS.

4. ON MAY 10, CAMARGO OFFERED THE GOVERNMENT'S CAREFULLY PREPARED REPLY. REFERRING TO THE GOB'S HISTORY OF COOPERATION WITH THE UN AND INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS, CAMARGO SAID THAT SIMONSEN'S STATEMENTS HAD CONFIRMED THIS POLICY, AND THAT THE SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO AN INSPECTION TEAM REFLECTED A "PERSONAL, LIBERAL, AND GENEROUS" POSITION OF THE MINISTER WHICH THE GOB ITSELF WOULD HOLD, "IF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE PERMITTED ONE TO IMAGINE A FULLY INDEPENDENT COMMISSION WHICH COULD ACT IN ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, IRRESPECTIVE OF IDEOLOGY OR REGIME." THE "INVIABILITY" OF THAT HYPOTHESIS, HOWEVER, LEADS THE GOB TO A DIFFERENT POSITION, HE DECLARED. BRAZIL'S ADHESION TO THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DOES NOT EMBRACE EFFORTS WHICH, INVOKING THE NOBILITY OF THAT CAUSE, VIOLATE PRINCIPLES ESSENTIAL TO HARMONIOUS INTERNATIONAL COEXISTENCE, SUCH AS NON-INTERVENTION IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. CONCLUDING, CAMARGO DECLARED THAT, "THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS WITHIN ITS EXCLUSIVE COMPETENCE THE OVERSIGHT OF THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN ITS TERRITORY AND THEREFORE CANNOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPT THAT ANY TYPE OF INVESTIGATION OR INQUIRY BE CONDUCTED BY THIRD PARTIES IN A MATTER WHICH IS WITHIN ITS EXCLUSIVE INTERNAL JURISDICTION."

5. IN CONGRESS, ARENA MEMBERS MINIMIZED THE INCIDENT, WHILE SEVERAL MDB LEGISLATORS COMMENTED WITH SOME IRONY THAT CAMARGO IN EFFECT HAD DECLARED THAT THE GOB IS NOT LIBERAL OR GENEROUS; ALENCAR FURTADO, MDB LEADER IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, CLAIMED IT WAS THE SORT OF SITUATION IN WHICH THE MINISTER INVOLVED EITHER RESIGNED OR LOST HIS PRESTIGE.

6. COMMENT. IN MAKING HIS COMMENTS, SIMONSEN MAY HAVE SHARED CAMARGO'S VIEW THAT THE CONDITIONS HE SET ON A HUMAN RIGHTS INSPECTION WERE IMPOSSIBLE OF ATTAINMENT (BY LOCAL DEFINITION), ALTHOUGH WE PREFER TO BELIEVE THAT THE STATEMENTS WERE A GENUINE AND OPTIMISTIC EXPRESSION OF BELIEF BY ONE OF THE MORE LIBERAL AND OPEN MEMBERS OF GEISEL'S CABINET. THE GOB HAS A LONGSTANDING OBJECTION TO VISITS OF THIS SORT, ALTHOUGH IT DID

PERMIT SOME YEARS AGO A LESS POLITICIZED AND CAREFULLY
CONDITIONED RED CROSS INSPECTION OF PRISON CONDITIONS.
IT WAS NOT TO BE EXPECTED THAT, HAVING RECENTLY TAKEN
A VERY FIRM PUBLIC POSITION AGAINST THE USG'S HUMAN
RIGHTS REPORT ON BRAZIL AS AN INTERFERENCE IN BRAZIL'S
INTERNAL AFFAIRS, THE GOB WOULD RELAX ITS POSITION NOW.
LOCALLY, THE EPISODE IS LIKELY TO PASS QUICKLY, WITHOUT
PUBLIC DAMAGE TO SIMONSEN, WHOM CAMARGO WAS CAREFUL TO
PROTECT IN HIS RESPONSE. SIMONSEN'S STANDING MAY,
HOWEVER, HAVE SUFFERED AMONG THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY,
WHO HAVE HAD AT BEST MIXED VIEWS TOWARD HIM AND WHO ARE
VERY SENSITIVE TO INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM ON HUMAN
RIGHTS OBSERVANCE IN BRAZIL. END COMMENT.
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